

Ontario. Crown Lands, Dept.
Administration of Crown
Lands Department under the
Government.

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Ontario. Crown Lands, 1882

ADMINISTRATION

OF

Crown Lands Department

UNDER

MOWAT GOVERNMENT.

**Ten Years of Efficient and
Economical Management.**

SEPTEMBER, 1882.

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CROWN LANDS DEPARTMENT,

The Crown Lands Department is the great revenue-producing branch of the Government, and, with the exception of the amount received as subsidy from the Dominion, provides the largest part of the annual income of the Province. The duties of the Department, instead of decreasing, are year by year growing greater and more complex. They comprise the sale and management of the Crown, Clergy and School lands still undisposed of; the locating of settlers in the Free Grant districts; the surveying of new townships from time to time, as they are required for settlement or the purposes of the timber trade; the construction of Colonization roads and bridges in the new and sparsely settled portions of the Province where the settlers are as yet unable to assume the burden of such works; the supervision of the vast area over which licenses to cut timber have been granted (such supervision becoming much more difficult year by year as settlement increases); the collection of Government charges and dues leviable upon such timber; and the settlement of the multifarious and often complicated questions which of necessity arise in the course of transactions covering so large a territory. The following figures and statements show the very decided increase in the work now performed by the Department, as compared with the years 1868-71—an increase which explains and far more than justifies any small additional expenditure which has occurred.

TOTAL LETTERS REGISTERED.

1868-71 (annual average)	15,156
1872-81 " "	19,076
Increase, 26 per cent.	

SALES.

Sales, 1868-71 (annual average)	59,400 acres.
" 1872-81 " "	77,400 "
Increase, 30 per cent.	

Letters registered, endorsed on papers, and noted on land rolls :

1868-71 (annual average)	8,660
1872-81 " "	11,747
Increase, 36 per cent.	

COLONIZATION ROADS.

Number of miles constructed, 1868-71	213
“ “ “ 1872-81	1,623
Average number of miles per annum, 1868-71.....	53
“ “ “ “ 1872-81.....	163
Increase, 210 per cent.	

ROADS REPAIRED.

Miles of road repaired, 1868-71.....	441
“ “ “ 1872-81.....	3,148
Average number of miles repaired per annum, 1868-71.....	110
“ “ “ “ “ 1872-81.....	314
Increase, 185 per cent.	

BRIDGES BUILT.

Number of bridges built 1868-71.....	18 or 4 per annum.
“ “ “ 1872-81.....	134 “13 “ “

NOTE.—The bridges built during the former period averaged an aggregate length per year of 668 feet, and during the latter, an aggregate length per year of 1,955 feet, or an increase of 1,287 feet of bridging per annum.

CORRESPONDENCE.

The correspondence in connection with the Colonization Roads branch has also very materially increased, as the following figures show :

Average number of letters received 1868-71.....	474
“ “ “ “ 1872-81.....	1418
Increase, 200 per cent.	
Average number of letters written 1868-71.....	276
“ “ “ “ 1872-81.....	697
Increase, 152 per cent.	

EXPENDITURE ON ROADS.

The expenditure on Colonization roads and bridges since 1872 has been large, amounting to no less a sum than \$973,511. The effect, in developing and promoting settlement in the newer portions of the Province, has been confessedly great. That, in addition, the money has been well and economically spent is proven by the following figures :

During the period 1868-71 the average number of miles of road built per year was 53, and of road repaired 110, the average annual cost being \$44,500, while from 1872 to 1881 the average per year was 162 miles of road built and 314 miles of road repaired at an average annual cost of \$97,351. In other words, during the latter period as compared with the former, there were three times as much road built and nearly three times as much road repaired per year, at an average annual cost of little more than double the amount expended in the former period.

COLONIZATION ROADS IN MUSKOKA.

In view of the impending election in Muskoka, it may be interesting to know what was done in the way of building and repairing Colonization roads and bridges in that district between 1868 and 1871, under the administration of the Hon. John Sandfield Macdonald, and also what has been done since that time under the present Government.

During the former period there were 120 miles of new road built, 113 miles of road repaired, 7 bridges built, and 1 bridge repaired, the total cost of the work being \$60,355. During the latter period there were 754 miles of new road built, 980 miles of road repaired, 43 bridges built and 15 repaired, at a total cost of \$410,669. That is to say, between 1868 and 1871 there were on an average 30 miles of road made, 28 miles of road repaired, and 2 bridges built per year, at an annual cost of \$15,100, while from 1872 to 1881 there were on an average 75 miles of road made, 98 miles repaired, and 4 bridges built, at an annual cost of \$41,066.

WOODS AND FORESTS.

The number of licenses issued (in duplicate) from 1868 to 1871 was 754, or 188 per annum, but from 1872 to 1881 they numbered 3,830, or 383 per annum.

Increase, 100 per cent.

TIMBER RETURNS.

Saw logs and square timber returns received and checked :

1868 to 1871	5,525 or 1,381 annual average.
1872 to 1881	35,868 or 3,586 " "

Increase, 160 per cent.

FREE GRANTS—A COMPARISON BETWEEN MUSKOKA AND MANITOBA.

The area set apart as Free Grant Territory covers about 10,750,000 acres, and of this there is now surveyed about 9,000,000 acres. The rate at which the population of the Free Grant Territory is increasing, notwithstanding the prominence which has been given to other parts of Canada—notably to Manitoba—as a desirable field for immigrants, and the consequent withdrawal of a part of the stream of immigration which would undoubtedly have found its way to the Muskoka and other districts, is very gratifying. Without attempting in any way to belittle the advantages offered by Manitoba, or to detract from the progress which that province has made of late years, it may be interesting to institute a comparison, founded on the census returns of 1871 and 1881, between the "Prairie Province" and the newer portions of Ontario, a comparison which will prove anything but unfavorable to the latter. In 1871 the white population of Manitoba was 12,228, and in 1881 (exclusive of an extension of the province made shortly before taking the census and not included in 1871) it

had risen to 47,548. The addition made to the population during the decade was at the rate of 3,562 per annum, the total increase for the ten years being 288 per cent. Comparing these figures with those given for Muskoka alone, we find that in 1871 the population of the latter district was 6,919. In 1881 it had increased to 27,204, or at the rate of 2,028 per annum during the ten years, the total increase for the period being 293 per cent. Manitoba, between 1871 and 1881, received one additional settler for every 230 acres of land; Muskoka during the same period received one for every 159 acres. Again, in Manitoba and the North-West the number of acres settled upon in 1881 by means of "homesteads" and "pre-emptions" was about 704,320, or one acre in every 112; while in Muskoka there were 104,522 acres of land located as Free Grants and sold during the same year, or one acre in every 30 throughout the whole district. And when it is remembered that in Muskoka there are no such centres of population and trade as Winnipeg and other places in Manitoba, the facts we have given will tell still more in favor of the Muskoka district. Taking all the circumstances into consideration, it must be admitted that the newer portions of Ontario are advancing towards their full development with rapid strides, and the state of facts revealed by the last census, as compared with that of 1871, cannot but be gratifying to every one who has the progress and prosperity of the outlying districts of our Province at heart.

LETTERS ON FREE GRANT BUSINESS.

The average number of letters written from the Free Grant branch of the Department during the years 1868-71 was 818 per annum, while during the period 1872-81 it was 2,928 per annum, or an increase of **257** per cent.

TOWNSHIPS.

In 1871 the number of townships open for location under the Free Grants Act was 54, and the number of agents for the disposal of Free Grant lands 10. In 1881 the number of townships open for location was 122, and the number of agents 17.

ACREAGE LOCATED.

The total acreage located from 1868 up to the end of 1871, deducting cancellations for non-fulfilment of settlement duties, was	348,780 acres.
or an average per year of	87,195 "
The total acreage located from 1872 up to the end of 1881, deducting cancellations as above, was	1,170,486 "
or an average per year of	117,048 "
The average increase per year, during the latter period, was thus 29,853 acres, or 34 per cent.	

The total acreage located up to the end of 1881, was 1,519,266, as compared with 348,780, the acreage located up to the end of 1871.

NUMBER OF LOCATEES.

The number of persons located from 1868 to end of 1871, less cancellations, was.....	2,769
From 1868 to end of 1881 the number was	9,753

RECAPITULATION.

The increase of acreage of Free Grants in actual occupation in 1881 over 1871, was.....	1,170,486 acres.
The number of locations actually occupied in 1881 over 1871 was.....	6,984
The number of townships surveyed in 1881 over those surveyed up to end of 1871 was	68

A PARTIAL EXPLANATION.

This progress in the settlement of our new and free grant territory will be considered most encouraging and satisfactory by every fair-minded person, when it is remembered that for the last few years the North-West Territory has overshadowed every other field for immigration. That the unsettled districts of our Province have been able to compete so successfully with the rich prairie country of the North-West, may to some extent be explained and accounted for by the fact that the intending settler has not been hampered, in selecting his lot and making his location, by unwise regulations, and by his finding locked up in the hands of companies and speculators the lands that should have been left open and free for *bona fide* settlement.

WORK CONNECTED WITH FREE GRANTS.

It may be pointed out that the amount of work and expense connected with the giving away of land under the Free Grants Act is fully as great as, if not greater than, that which attends the disposal of it by sale. When a man buys a lot, all that the Department has to do is simply to carry out the sale and receive the money when paid in by the purchaser; whereas in the case of a free grant, affidavits have to be made in proper form, and examined by the Department, before the intending locatee can be located for the lot; then the Department has to see that the regulations as to settlement duties, etc., are duly performed; and finally, at the expiration of the term, it has to receive and pass upon fresh affidavits made by the locatee and at least two others, respecting the due fulfilment of all conditions of the grant, before the Department is in a position to issue a patent for the lot. In addition, applications for the cancelling of locations are frequently and constantly being made on account of the settlement duties not having been performed, when the Department is obliged to examine

in each case the evidence upon which such cancellation is asked, and decide upon it. It will thus be seen that every location is the subject of no small amount of work and attention on the part of the Department.

SUCCESS IN ADMINISTERING THE DEPARTMENT.

It is perhaps unnecessary to enter upon a defence of the manner in which the Crown Lands Department has been administered since a Reform Government came into power, as no serious attempt has been made to impugn that administration in any way. The steady flow of settlers into the newer districts of the Province, notwithstanding the inducements offered by other portions of the Dominion, the advances made in developing the resources—agricultural, mineral and forest—of those districts, and the accurate and satisfactory way in which the large and increasing revenue derived from the timber trade is collected, are but instances which testify to the honest and capable manner in which the administration of the Department has been conducted ever since it was entrusted to the present Government.

CONTRACT SYSTEM vs. OVERSEERS.

One of the petty, unfounded accusations which have been made against the Department is, that the system adopted in the construction and repair of Colonization roads is erroneous and extravagant, and that instead of having the work performed under the supervision of overseers appointed by the Department, it should be let by contract to the lowest bidder. Those who urge this course cannot have given the matter the consideration to which it is entitled, and cannot be conversant with the character of the work to be done, or with the difficulties which experience has shown to be inseparable from the building or repairing of roads under the contract system in the newer portions of the Province. The first cost of an ordinary Colonization road averages from \$200 to \$250 per mile. The Department, feeling that it would be relieved of a good deal of responsibility if these roads could safely be built by contract, made an attempt in former years to have the work done in this way. Tenders were asked for in the usual manner, and it was invariably found that large numbers of persons offered to do the work, many of whom were totally unacquainted with the method of constructing roads, or with the carrying on of public works of any kind. Those who tendered lowest were frequently found to be of this latter class, and the Department being as a rule unacquainted with the parties tendering, or their competency to do the work, were bound to accept the lowest tender, and were, in the majority of cases, saddled with an inexperienced and often incompetent contractor. The result was badly made roads and inefficient and unsatisfactory work generally. It was found impracticable to get compensation from bondsmen; and even if the attempt should be successful, it would not give the settlers what they wanted, viz., good and well-built roads. Again, it was

impossible to give the exact location of a road at the time of letting the contract, as variations, in nearly every case, have to be made when men go upon the ground and begin actual work. Where this occurred, the contractor made it an excuse to claim damages on account of the change in what he alleged was to have been the original location of the road, in respect to which he had framed his tender. In fact, it became evident, after often-repeated trials, that for these and other reasons it was impossible to construct or repair Colonization roads under the contract system in an at all satisfactory manner; that money was annually lost in the attempt; and that the work done was not performed so well or so economically as would have been the case had it been under the supervision of competent overseers. After thoroughly testing the matter, the Government, although reluctant to abandon the contract system, came to the conclusion that the true policy in the construction and repair of Colonization roads was to place good overseers in charge, who were required to make proper returns and produce proper vouchers for all expenditure, and to keep complete and careful control over them by means of experienced inspectors, whose duty it was to report to the Department from time to time upon the progress and performance of the work.

SALE OF TIMBER LIMITS.

A very successful sale of timber limits in the Districts of Muskoka and Parry Sound, adjacent for the most part to the waters of French River and Lake Nipissing, was held by the Department on 6th December, 1881. It was found that in the interest of the public revenue, as well as of the settlers who had taken up lands in some unlicensed townships in the section named, it was necessary to deal with the pine within the territory before it became jeopardized by the clearing of the land and the fires raised in process thereof. In this way timber of the finest quality is often cut down and applied to uses for which inferior lumber would be suitable, the result being a depreciation of the value of the timber limits before they are brought into market, and a consequent loss to the revenue, without being of any advantage to the settler.

AREA PLACED UNDER LICENSE.

The territory placed under license at the sale consisted of the townships of Mowat, Blair, McConkey, Hardy, Patterson, Mills, Sinclair, Bethune, Proudfoot, Gurd, Machar, Strong, Joly, Laurier, Pringle, Lount, Nipissing and Himsworth, and covered an area of 1,379 square miles. These townships were placed under license simply because large numbers of settlers were going in upon the lands, and the timber would have been destroyed by fire and otherwise; the only way to prevent such a waste of the natural resources of the country, and to secure the timber for revenue purposes, was to place the territory under license, as before stated. And as it was necessary to place these few townships under license for the

reasons given above, it would have been inexcusable negligence on the part of the Government not to take advantage of the favorable condition of the market existing at the time the sale was made.

PROCEEDS OF THE SALE.

The prices obtained at the sale were beyond precedent. The total bonus paid was \$733,675.25, or an average bonus per square mile of \$532, and this without taking into account the ground rent of \$2 per square mile, which of itself produces an annual revenue of \$2,700, and without taking into account, either, the Government dues of 75 cents per thousand feet board measure, and \$3.00 per thousand feet cubic measure, leviable upon the timber when cut. The proceeds of this sale, as compared with former sales of timber limits, are most satisfactory, and it is gratifying to know that almost the entire amount bid as bonus has been promptly paid in according to the terms of sale.

ONLY THE RIGHT TO CUT THE TIMBER SOLD.

It is to be observed that, as has been previously stated, what was sold was only the right to cut the pine timber upon the territory, and that the timber when cut will be subject to the Government charges mentioned above. In this way a large sum will be paid into the revenue annually as a result of the sale. No right or title whatever in the land was conveyed to the purchasers at the sale, and the licenses issued to them are strictly under the control of the Legislature and the Department.

AN OPPORTUNE TIME.

The time selected for the sale was extremely opportune; parties engaged in lumbering had just closed a successful season's business, and having the means were prepared to invest in limits. As a consequence, the attendance was large and the bidding spirited.

AN ABSURD CHARGE.

An absurd charge of inconsistency has been attempted to be fastened upon the Government in connection with this sale of timber limits, inasmuch as they should, it is said, have previously intimated their intention of making the sale to the Legislature, and obtained the consent of the latter thereto. Now, apart from the fact that there is nothing in the statute-book requiring such a course, it has always been the contention of the Reform party, that the interests of the country demand that the responsibility for ordinary administrative acts should not be removed from the Government and placed upon the Legislature. To the Government are entrusted matters of routine and administration, and the true policy is to hold the members thereof individually and collectively responsible for the proper performance of such duties, not to deprive them of the

power of taking action. This principle, so far as the disposal of timber limits is concerned, was embodied in a resolution moved by Hon. E. B. Wood in the session of 1873, to the effect, that the berths or limits should "be offered for sale by public auction at the upset price . . . at such time and place, and upon such conditions, and by such officer, as the Commissioner of Crown Lands shall direct by public notice for that purpose."* This resolution was carried, not only by means of the votes of members supporting the Government, but also by the aid of several members on the other side of the House—including Messrs. Cameron, Meredith, Lauder, Deacon, and Merrick—only four of the Opposition, in fact, recording their votes against it. The course of the Government in this matter has been thoroughly consistent, and strictly in the interest of the Province.

* Jour. Ont. Assem., 1873, p. 142.

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